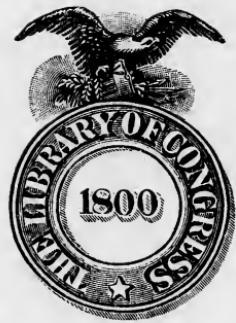


LIFTING THE LATCH

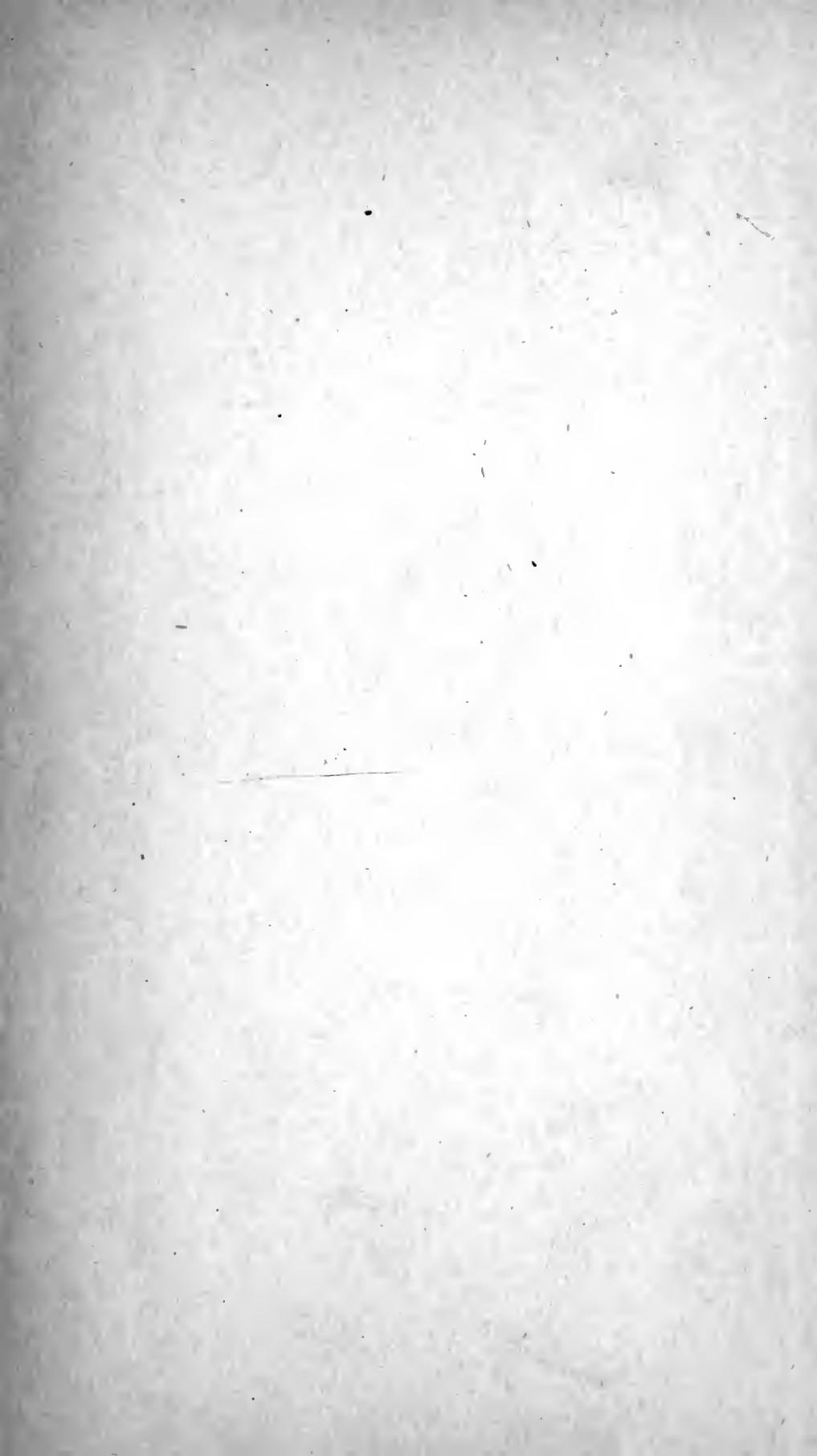


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LIFTING THE LATCH



Lifting the Latch

An Hour with the Twenty-
Third Psalm

New Thoughts on an Old Theme

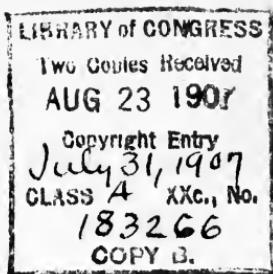
By

ELIJAH P. BROWN, D. D.

Founder of the Ram's Horn, author of
"From Nowhere to Beulahland,"
"Rounds in the Golden Lad-
der," "The Raven and
the Chariot," etc.



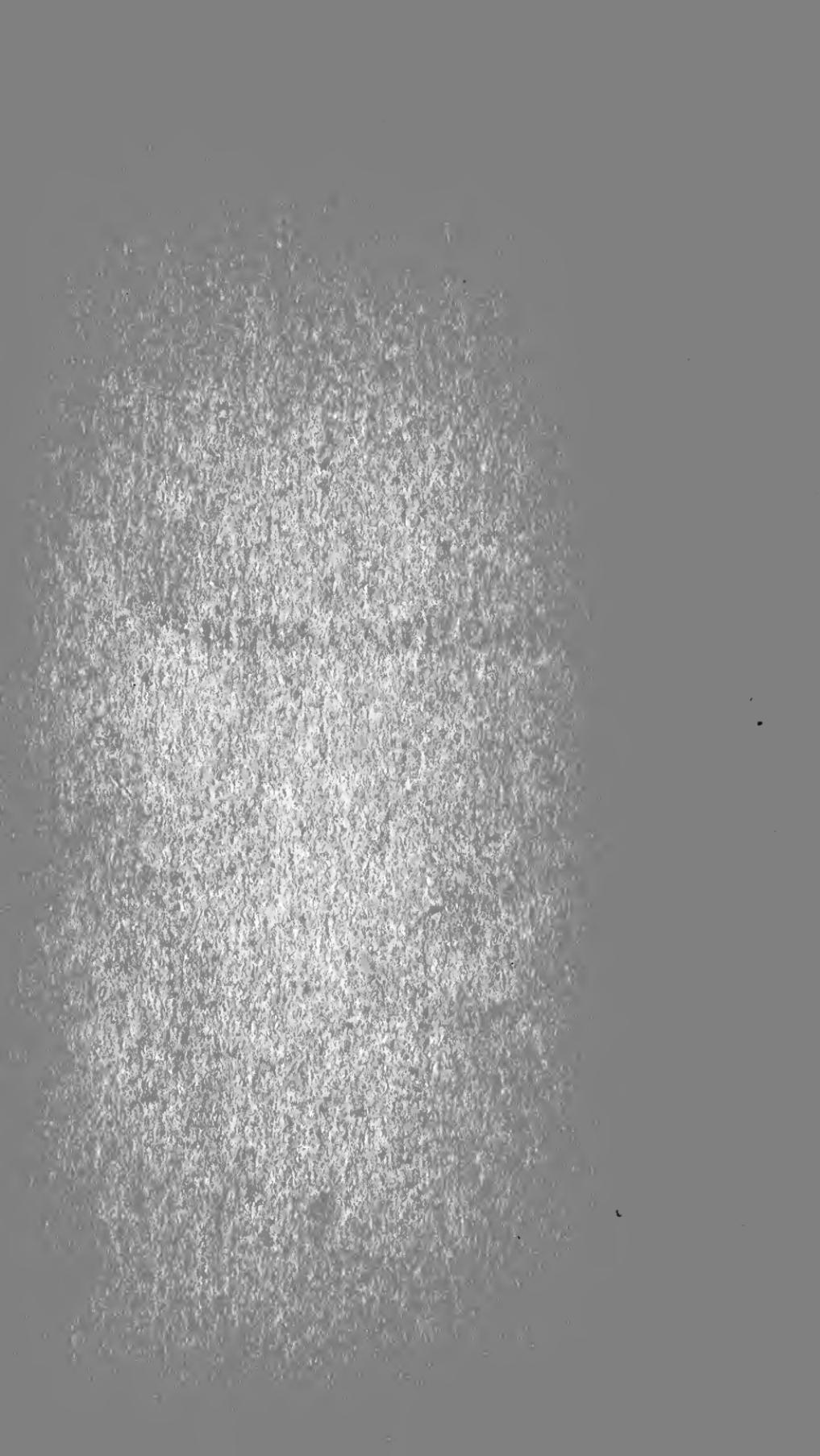
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LIFTING THE LATCH

CHAPTER I.

COMING TO THE DOOR.

IN the South are powerful compresses, into which bales of cotton are reduced to only a small part of their former bulk; and it seems to me that something similar has been done with this wonderful Psalm, as if the whole Bible had been compressed into a few lines; for there is nothing that the soul needs, in the way of promise or experience, that it does not contain. No matter what our situation or condition in life may be, this psalm is a never-failing source of comfort and inspiration. It is a veritable diamond mine filled with precious jewels, to which we may help ourselves and be made rich.

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Somebody has called it the nightingale of the Psalms, and it surely is that, for it sings in the night. There are song birds that sing only in the sunshine, but the Twenty-third Psalm never hangs its head in the day of misfortune and affliction. Indeed, its most sunny song is the one it sings for us in our blackest night. No darkness can hush its notes of sweetness and comfort. No trouble can silence its blessed melody of cheer; for even in the valley of the shadow of death it sings with an angel voice, to sustain, encourage, and fill us with confidence and hope. Indeed, it sings the loudest and the sweetest when the darkness is the deepest and the gloom is the thickest.

It is not surprising that David's music could drive the evil spirit out of King Saul, when he could sing for him such songs as this, for it is still driving out evil spirits by the legion all over the world. There is so much

COMING TO THE DOOR

of joy and hope, and strong confidence in God, that no evil spirit can long remain in the same house with it. When this song is sung in every heart, the millennium will be at full dawn.

Children learn the Twenty-third Psalm, and old people never forget it. It is a continual source of inspiration to the living, and a never-failing comfort to the dying. When the health and the property and the loved ones are taken away, this blessed Psalm remains to sustain, cheer, and encourage. It turns our eyes in the right direction to see that we have much more left than we have lost. Every trial and every trouble fills its golden words with brighter meaning. It gives us beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. It tells us that, although weeping may endure for a night, joy is certain to come in the morning.

Rich, indeed, is the fortunate man

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who has this miracle-working Psalm hidden in his heart. It will be a key of hope in his bosom to unlock the door of every prison. In time of hunger it will be bread to him like that of the father's house, and it will quench his thirst like water from the old well of Bethlehem.

It may have been the Twenty-third Psalm that Paul and Silas were singing in the dungeon at midnight, when the walls of the old prison at Philippi were almost shaken down; for no prison walls can long stand against the heart that is joyfully and hopefully singing this wonderful song of God. It makes the present endurable and the future glorious in hope. It tells us that if David could have the Lord for his Shepherd, we may also have Him as a very present help in every time of need.

I do n't believe that David was in clover up to his knees at the time he wrote this Psalm, for the reason that

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faith never speaks out as he did, so long as there is a blade of grass in sight. We are not apt to trust much beyond our conscious need. We are like the little girl who said:

“I do n’t have to pray any more that I won’t get the scarlet fever, because I ’ve got a sulphur bag on my neck.”

We first trust in everything under the sun in which we can trust, and then, as a last resort, we trust in God. During a storm at sea a frightened woman ran to the captain and cried out in terror:

“Captain, are we going to be lost? Are we going to be lost?”

“We must do our best and trust in God,” was the captain’s reply.

“O dear!” exclaimed the woman; “has it come to that?”

No man ever takes the Lord for his Shepherd as long as he is able to find any kind of a pasture for himself. When David took the Lord for

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his Shepherd, it must have been at a time when it was about the only thing he could do; at a time when he realized that he had made a wretched failure of life; or at a time, perhaps, when he had been doing something foolish, imprudent, or sinful. It may have been when he had just been making one of the greatest mistakes of his life, or when all his props seemed to have been knocked from under him, and all his plans appeared to have come to naught.

David was a thoughtful man, much given to meditation, and a very close observer of himself. Whenever he did a wrong or unwise thing, he would soon be trying to discover what it was that had made him do it. Perhaps on a day when he was greatly mortified over some of his misdoings, he may have said to himself:

“I am just like a sheep. A sheep will go astray when it has no earthly reason for doing it, and it is just that

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way with me. I am as foolish and shortsighted as a sheep."

A sheep is the symbol of helpless foolishness, and as David thought over his life, with its mistakes and failures, he would have naturally thought of a sheep and his own resemblance to it, and this would bring him to where he would keenly feel his need of a shepherd.

David had been a shepherd himself, and knew the meaning of the word as no other could. But for this he would never have thought of having the Lord for his Shepherd. This, of itself, more than repaid him for all the years of toil and hardship he had spent in caring for his flock. This shows how some of our hardest experiences may be great blessings in disguise. The fellowship we may have with Christ through having been born in a home of poverty may be to us a richer heritage than the millionaire's gold.

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To have the privilege of living in a world like this, gives us a great advantage over the angels; for every experience in this life is a step in the golden stairway over which we may mount up to God, and every trial a window that may some day open toward Him. What we undergo here is the gold we borrow from the Egyptians to put into the tabernacle of the Lord. Our afflictions, misfortunes, and disappointments; our successes, victories, and triumphs; our tears, our smiles, and our frights, and in fact all our experiences and relationships, help us to know God as we never could do without them, and knowledge of God can never be too dear at any price.

It was because David knew sheep so well that he could know God so well. The work of caring for his flock may have seemed little more than hard and thankless drudgery while it was being done; but the try-

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ing experience was worth all it cost, for it qualified him to walk with God as he never could have done without it.

David did not say "The Lord is my Shepherd" when his sky was bright and no want in sight. He did not say it when every man who ran toward the throne was the bearer of good tidings, for he could not have felt the need of a shepherd then. It must have been at some such time as he describes in saying:

"Consider mine enemies, for they are many, and hate me with cruel hatred. . . . The sorrows of death compassed me about, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. . . . My sore ran in the night.

In a time of such extremity it is not hard for the heart to trust; and this is why I do not think that it could have been on a day like that when David danced before the ark of God, that he took the Lord for

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his Shepherd. All about him was dark and desolate, but the moment his faith said, "The Lord is my Shepherd," he touched the button that turned on the electric light, and all the rest of the Psalm is what the light revealed to him.

I call your attention to the fact that David's declaration was a definite act of faith, by which he touched God in a new way, and all that follows is simply the experience that grew out of that single act of faith. The first sentence was the lifting of the latch, and the remainder of the Psalm the beautiful garden into which the door opened. Much faith always results in much experience. The poor woman put out her trembling hand and touched the robe of Jesus, and health and strength were the resultant experience. Without that touch of faith her experience would have continued to be that of a helpless invalid. It was the same with

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David. Taking the Lord for his Shepherd was his touch of faith, and the green pastures and other good things were the resultant experience. Had not David begun as he did, he could not have said, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." He had come to the gate and entered by faith before he could know what was beyond it.

Notice also that David got peace before he got pasture, and was rested before he was feasted. To know the meaning of rest we must first have the faith to trust. We must say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," before we can know anything about the still waters and green pastures. Contrast with this: "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him."

The man who journeys in a certain direction meets with something quite different from what he would have

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encountered had he taken any other course; and the journeys which we make in our Christian life are no exception to this rule. Whenever our faith appropriates God in a new way, we set out upon a spiritual journey unlike any ever undertaken before, and every day will be filled with experiences we should never have known had we not passed through the door of that particular way.

CHAPTER II.

LIFTING THE LATCH.

“THE Lord is my Shepherd” is the door through which the sheep goes to the green pastures, and it never gets there by any other way. The first sentence is the lifting of the latch that opens the gate, and all that follows is a description of what the gate opens into. Or, to look at it in a more modern way: Saying “The Lord is my Shepherd” is the step that puts us on the train, and the remainder of the Psalm is the country through which the train carries us. And what a delightful country it is! Certainly there is no lack of beauty and variety.

Before David could say “The

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Lord is my Shepherd," he had to be willing for the Lord to say, "This is My sheep." There can be no large appropriation of God until we are willing for God to have complete ownership of us; but when we once fairly reach the place where we are willing to give all, we soon get all.

As soon as David said, "The Lord is my Shepherd," he had rest; and this is always the first reward of trust. His rest is clearly indicated by the words, "I shall not want." His anxiety was all gone, and yet there had been no change in his circumstances. He was just as hungry and weary and torn and bruised as before, but he had a Shepherd now, and was not anxious about the pasture.

David knew only too well, from his own experience as a shepherd, that no sheep with a good shepherd could long be in need of anything, and so the moment his faith said,

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“The Lord is my Shepherd,” he could also say, with great confidence, “I shall not want.” He remembered how he had cared for his own sheep, and knew each one by name. He could not forget that the one most prone to wander was the one for which he had done the most. He sometimes forgot the others, but never that wayward sheep. It was the last in his thought at night, and the first in the morning. He must always make sure that it was safe before he could sleep. Often had he gone out to seek for it until he found it, and then how gladly had he taken it home! No wonder he could so quietly say, “I shall not want.” There was no uncertainty about what God would do as soon as he remembered what he himself had done.

Notice the language, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” First person, singular number; present tense. God loves to have us draw on Him

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at sight, and do it in big figures. He is able to pay spot cash, and does not ask us to take His ninety-day note.

Had David said, "The Lord will be my Shepherd," that would have been the last of him, so far as this Psalm is concerned; and that is the reason so many of our lives are like worn-out cistern pumps. We need a faith that will take hold of God to-day, and trust Him to be what we need now, as Jacob took hold of the angel. A man in the army had a musket with a lock so rusty that it took all his strength to pull the trigger, and made a sure aim impossible. A hang-fire faith is not much better than no faith at all. It takes boiling water to make steam, and a hot faith to prevail with God.

It is that little word *is* that makes things go, and keeps them going, in every fruitful Christian life. In going through a large carriage manufactory some time ago, I noticed that

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everything on wheels was marked "The Izzer Brand." I wish we had more Izzer Brand Christians.

That little word "my" shows that David had a faith that had teeth, for it was able to take a tight grip and hold on in a definite way. Had he said, "The Lord is *our* Shepherd," he would have been like a man filling out a check with ciphers instead of figures. A man whose need was great, and whose faith was being sorely tried, was told by a friend to raise a commotion in heaven on his own account, by telling the Lord that he must have His help, and have it quick. He got it. That is what David did with that little word "my." Try it for yourself, and see how quick it will get you out of trouble.

Everything good in Christian experience is the result of trusting God in some particular way. I have seen a child put its hand in its father's and walk by his side, and I have seen

LIFTING THE LATCH

another put itself in his arms and be carried, and each had a different experience.

When David said, "The Lord is my Shepherd," he made a sight draft on the Lord for all that a sheep could ever need, and the fact that God promptly honored his draft should encourage us to do the same thing whenever a famine of any kind comes in sight. A sheep's trust immediately gave him a sheep's rest, and he soon found himself in a sheep's heaven.

David was in a desert at the time he said, "The Lord is my Shepherd;" but soon after he did say it he was where the rich, tender grass was higher than his head. "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures," is as complete a pic-

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ture of abundant satisfaction as it is possible for words to make. The hunger is gone, and the supply within easy reach is beyond all possible need. From having had sheep of my own, I know that when a sheep is lying down in a green pasture it is either satisfied or sick, one or the other. As long as a healthy sheep has the slightest hunger it will be up and trying to satisfy it. To say that the sheep is lying down in green pastures, means that every want has been abundantly satisfied and its future need well provided for.

If we would only take the Lord for our Shepherd, as David did, how much better we would fare than by anything we can do for ourselves!

“Green pastures.” These are the very best, and when God gives, He always gives the best. This world has nothing to offer that can begin to compare with the green pastures into which the Good Shepherd leads

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His flock. The sheep has no anxiety about the permanence or durability of the green pastures. It has made the best of them, and is now quietly taking its rest there, without a single anxious thought. When we take our burdens to the Lord, we should leave them there.

The man who undertakes to lie down in the green pastures of wealth, station, or fame, never gets any rest there. All such pastures are only in imagination, and fade before they can satisfy. You can not give a man money enough to make him contented and happy. The more he gets the more he wants; but not so with God's green pastures. They always satisfy. And then it is not a green pasture, but green pastures; there are many of them, and there is only one of me.

There are pastures of all kinds; good, bad, and indifferent; and a sheep will manage to get along some-

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how in any kind of a pasture; but there are pastures in which it will not do well. Through misunderstanding, a hired man once turned a flock of my sheep into a large blackberry patch, and they were there some days before I discovered what had been done. The sheep had browsed those blackberry bushes clear down to the ground, but they did n't take on any fat while there. The Lord's sheep sometimes get into very poor pastures, but it is only when they go astray and fail to follow the Good Shepherd.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” If God did n't want us to know how ready and willing He is to do great things for us, He would never have allowed this Psalm to go into the Bible. The fact that He so graciously honored David's faith, shows that He will just as readily honor our faith, if it is the same kind of faith that David had.

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What a beautiful picture of satisfaction and abundance! What a striking example of great need and prompt help! The sheep is satisfied, and yet has abundance all about it within easy reach. For a contrasting picture, remember that "the young lions do lack and suffer hunger," and yet we all want to be young lions.

"Green pastures," not dry fodder. God always gives the best whenever He has a chance, but sometimes we limit Him with our little faith. An evangelist told me he could never take a vacation to get the rest he needed, because it took all that he could get in free-will offerings, by working constantly, to support his family. I said:

"Why do n't you ask the Lord to raise your pay? He will do it."

When I met him a year or two later, he told me it had been done.

There is no danger of asking too largely if we do it in faith.

LIFTING THE LATCH

“Let thy soul delight itself in fatness,” was not put in the Bible simply to fill up. “Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart,” is more than poetry. Meet the conditions, and it will give you a trip to Europe, if you want it.

There is plenty of good pasture for all good sheep, and it is no part of the sheep’s business to try to find the pasture for itself. That is the shepherd’s work. While one pasture is being consumed He is preparing another, and in due time will lead us to it. So do not worry if the picking happens to be a little close to-day. It will be better to-morrow.

To have a good time in this life we must learn to live it one day at a time, and leave all the future days to Him who said, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Do not let any more trouble come into this day than properly belongs to it. It is

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the cares of to-morrow, and next week, and next year, that make us grow old before our time. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Believe it and do it.

If supplies are running short, do the best you can to provide for your necessities, but do it hopefully and trustfully. Do n't worry. Do n't borrow trouble. Count on good things, and you will have the joy of expectancy anyhow. Review your life, and you will find that your dark forebodings have seldom been realized, while much good fortune that you did n't expect has come to you. So thank God and take courage, and look for good things and not bad ones.

Doctors have poor success with chronic invalids who are never cheerful, but the hopeful patient can be cured with bread pills. Go to war against all worry and fret, by having strong confidence in God, and every

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blow you strike will be in a good cause. What if it is raining to-day? It will do the crops good, and bring down the price of provisions to-morrow. Many a man has committed suicide in a dark hour, who would have been shouting happy had he only waited a week.

Trust in God is as sure to give rest and peace as warmth is to be found in sunshine. "Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he." The condition of the promise is trust in the Lord; not in the height of the church steeple, or in the wife's Church membership, or in the prayers we are going to make after awhile—when we feel more like it—but in the Lord. Not in the purity of our motives, or in the correctness of our intentions. Not in divers meats, washings, and oblations. Not because we have done this and have not done that. Not because we are a preacher, or a deacon, or an elder, or a class-leader, or somebody

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else. Not because we are trying to taper off in sin, and expect to get clear out of it after awhile. Not because we say prayers by the yard, pay tithes of all we possess, and fast twice a week. Not because we have crossed the sea to become a missionary, and are toiling in thankless drudgery among a people who can not know or appreciate the sacrifices we are making. Not because we have given up our boats and nets and all else to follow the One we thought was going to be king—but because we have got down to the place where we realize that neither our accomplishments, belongings, nor works can do any more for us than the dust on the balance, and that our only dependence is in the word of God. When we get there we shall have songs in the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOOR WIDE OPEN.

“HE leadeth me beside the still waters.” The sheep of the Good Shepherd are not kept lying down in the green pastures. This is only the beginning. It is a good beginning, but there is something better. No longer hungry and lean and lost, but cared for, feasted, and refreshed; eating and drinking at pleasure, and having no anxiety about the future; having the very best, and enjoying it gratefully. A true picture of the beginning of Christian life. Contrast it with, “And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land.”

The sheep is on the move beside the

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still waters. Not lying down there. The man who is still tied to that great revival they had forty years ago, would do well to notice this. The man who follows the Good Shepherd will not become stiff in the joints from standing still. Christian life is not a monotonous, uninteresting, humdrum state of being, but is full of delight, progress, and transformation, when it is lived under the guidance of Him who said:

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Following Christ is never dull work when He is followed close enough. Every experience will open the door to new experience. One green pasture will be succeeded by another of a different kind, and so with the crystal fountains of still water.

Soon after my conversion, I began to circulate the story of it in pamph-

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let form. One day I received a letter containing a dime from an old lady, who said she had read the first number of my experience, and would like to have number two. I was glad she expected me to keep on the move.

Christian journey is a journey. It ought to be a glad going on, from glory to glory; but too many seem to think it is a going on from cave to cave, or from one dark valley to another. We all know that with too many it is a mere standing still in idleness. It is talking with those who have traveled that makes us want to see the world; not with those who have never been ten miles from home. Talking about the fire that fell from heaven forty years ago never warms the meeting any, but everybody wants to hear about a religious experience that is up-to-date.

Where were you yesterday? Lying down in green pastures. Where are you to-day? Walking beside the

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still waters. Good. Where do you expect to be to-morrow? Walking in the paths of righteousness. No wonder this blessed Psalm is still fresh and sweet as on the day it was first uttered.

It is the moving Christian who keeps the devil moving and makes trouble for the principalities and powers of evil. There will be no war with Amalek until we break camp and try to go somewhere. As long as we hang around the wells of Elim, and keep down our perspiration by staying under the cool shade of the palm trees, everything will be as calm as a Quaker prayer-meeting; but when we begin to make daily marches toward Canaan there will soon be something doing on the skirmish line.

“The still waters.” Here we see again how God always gives the best. The still waters are the very best. The running waters are warm and roily and murky, but the still waters

THE DOOR WIDE OPEN

are the clear, deep, crystal pools, where the thirsty sheep may drink to its heart's content, and behold its own reflection in the cool depths as it does so.

Sheep require a great deal of water, and will go astray for water sooner than for pasture. They must have water, but in the still waters their great need in this respect is abundantly provided for.

“He leadeth me.” Not driven, but led. In the Holy Land sheep are not driven as they are here, but in all cases they follow the shepherd. A blessed thought in connection with this Psalm is that we need never take a single step alone, but that we may be constantly led by One who knows all about us, and all about the way we must tread. In this respect the Christian has the advantage over everybody else, for though he may have to travel much in the dark, he does not have to go alone. The man

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who leaves God out of his plan for life, is like a blind man groping his way in a country filled with chasms. It is only a question of time as to when he will fall to his destruction.

“He restoreth my soul.” Notice that the Shepherd does it all, and all the sheep has to do is take what is given, and follow on to something better. Its wants are all foreseen and provided for by the Shepherd. If God were not ready to do the same for us, this Psalm would not be in the Bible.

In Palestine the shepherd not only looks after his sheep as to pasture and water, but he is also its doctor and nurse when it is sick or hurt. If a bone is broken he sets it, and does all he can to restore the sheep to health and strength. When a sheep is injured it is not knocked in the head, as it would be in most places, but the shepherd takes care of it and saves its life. When the sheep first

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found itself lying down in the green pasture, it may have been too weak to stand on its feet. Its fleece may have been torn and covered with mud, its bones broken, and its flesh bleeding; but the shepherd dressed its wounds and restored it, and it was soon strong and able to follow him.

The word "restore" is a very precious one to me. When more than forty years old, I was converted from life-long infidelity, through the preaching of D. L. Moody, whom I had gone to hear out of curiosity. For many years I had been a worker against the Bible and Christianity. One of my addresses was being circulated as a liberal tract. As soon as God revealed Himself to me—which He did in a way so convincing that I have never since had even a temptation to doubt—I began to be greatly troubled over the wasted years of my previous life. Indeed, I grieved so much about the past as

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to interfere with present joy and usefulness; but one day as I read my Bible I found a promise that seemed to have been made especially for me. My faith took hold of it and made it mine at once; and from that hour I have never had one single anxious thought about my past life. The promise was this:

“I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”

That verse was like a voice from heaven to me, and gave me a peace about the wasted past that has remained unbroken from that day to this. I do n’t know how God is going to restore those wasted years for me, but I am sure that He will do it.

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” The paths of righteousness are paths of peace, because they are paths of safety. They are paths of righteousness, because they are right paths in which to walk. All other paths are

THE DOOR WIDE OPEN

ways of danger, no matter how safe they may look. Paths are well-defined ways of travel, and the paths of righteousness are usually well marked. So much so that there is no danger of losing the way in them.

I once heard a scholar say that, in the original, the words translated paths of righteousness mean wagon ruts. It puzzled me until I remembered that the wagon wheels of David's time were made of wood, and were about a foot thick. What a splendid path for sheep! Do n't be afraid of getting too much light on the Bible. As well try to dim gold by rubbing it.

"In the paths of righteousness." Think of what the sheep might have lost by not following the shepherd there. Suppose it had taken to the woods for itself when it saw a dark-looking place ahead; how much of the Psalm would have been lost. The best thing the sheep could do was to

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follow, and we can do no better. No man can ever find so good a path for his feet as the one in which the Lord would lead him. When we sing, "Where He leads me, I will follow," let us mean it and do it.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRANSFORMATION SCENE.

“YEA, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” Notice that the paths of righteousness lead straight into the valley of the shadow of death, and it is always so. The man who steps where the Lord tells him to walk, will soon find out that he must die to live. If he keeps close to the Shepherd in the paths of righteousness he will not long have to be a sheep. He will reach a place where he will not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit; a place where love, and not self-interest, will control his life; a place where he will see God, and die to everything selfish; a place where he will know

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at last that he is wholly the Lord's and can say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

He will be changed as the sacrifice on the altar was changed when the fire fell upon it from above. He will come to where he will have such a revelation of the love of Christ that the sheep will be changed into a warrior. His own self-will will die, and the law of God be written on his heart. In the valley of the shadow of death his weakness will be changed into strength, and his foolishness into wisdom. What was a fleece will become a coat of mail, and he will take his place on God's line of battle as a warrior. In short, the paths of righteousness lead right into the will of God, and no Christian is ever where he ought to be until he gets there.

It is the usual thing to put the valley of the shadow of death at the end of life; but that it not where we

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find it in the Bible. That is not where it belongs in Christian experience. It belongs right where we find it in this Psalm. Right in the middle—but that middle is the end of the sheep life. That is where Bunyan puts it in his “Pilgrim’s Progress,” and it is where we will find it if we faithfully follow the Good Shepherd in the path of righteousness. If we do this, we shall be certain to find it a valley of transformation; a place where we shall die to self and be made alive to Christ.

The sheep can only go by sight and sense, but the warrior lives and overcomes by faith. The sheep can not even protect itself, but the warrior is able to take his stand on the firing line, and with his great shield quench all the fiery darts of the enemy. The sheep is for sacrifice and the warrior for service. One cause of weakness in the Church to-day is too many sheep and not enough warriors; too

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many who have strayed from the paths of righteousness, and have missed the valley of the shadow of death.

The Lord's armies do not spring from dragon's teeth that have been sown, but are made up of transformed sheep. No sheep can look into the face of the Shepherd in the valley of the shadow of death and remain a sheep. The look kills the sheep and gives life to the warrior. No man could see God and live, in Old Testament times, and no sheep can see the face of the Shepherd in the valley of the shadow of death and continue to live as a sheep.

The proof of this is that before the valley of the shadow of death is reached the talk is all about the shepherd, but in the valley it is to the shepherd. No sheep ever talks to the shepherd anywhere, but the warrior talks to his captain.

“I will fear no evil: for Thou art

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with me." This is not the voice of a sheep. It is the warrior's expression of sound confidence. The soul that is obedient to the heavenly vision is sure to reach the same experience. It will not take a very long journey in the paths of righteousness to bring it to the valley of transformation, where the life and character changes. It will soon reach a place where the green pastures and still waters will no longer be wanted, because it has come to something so much better. The Lord of life is there, and where He is, naught else is lacking. No pastures are there, and no feast is there, because they are not needed.

When Moses went up into the mountain to spend forty days with the Lord, he did n't take any provisions with him, and yet he returned with his face shining. The multitude that had no bread could not remain hungry when they had the Lord of the harvest with them.

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For the Christian the old life is constantly coming to an end and the new life beginning. Paul said, "I die daily," which was only another way of saying, "I am continually growing." In less than an hour after a young convert found Christ, he said, "I can not stay in the business I am now in."

The paths of righteousness had already brought him into the valley of the shadow of death. He was dead to the old life, and alive to the new. He was a warrior, and took a stand against what God had told him was wrong.

The godless life of the world becomes intolerable to the true follower of Christ. There is war to the knife between the new nature and Amalek. No laws have to be passed to keep grown-up men and women from riding sticks and making mud pies. The theater and the dance and the card table and the saloon have no

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attraction for the soul that is in communion with Christ. The very thought of such things is gall and wormwood to him. Profanity stabs him like a knife, and vile thought and speech are impossible. He is now in the valley of the shadow of death, and the old life must perish.

There is this difference between a worldling and a Christian: A Christian may sometimes do wrong, but never without repenting. Peter denied his Lord, but afterward had to go out and weep bitterly.

But no matter in what way we look at the valley of the shadow of death, there are some things about it that are very comforting. In the first place it is a valley, and a valley always has higher ground on the other side. Another comforting thing is that we shall not have to go through it alone, nor make the journey in the dark. The Lord Himself is with us, and He is our Light and our Salva-

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tion. No place can ever be dark where He is.

I will never forget the first time I went through the Lasalle Street tunnel in Chicago on the cable cars. I had been through it in the old days, when it was dark and dismal, and as the car turned to go down into the tunnel, I thought:

“Must we go through that dreadful place?”

It was a dark, rainy day outside, and I thought of how much worse it would be in the tunnel; but, like most imaginary troubles, the reality was nothing like what I had supposed it would be in the tunnel; but, like most the mouth of the tunnel our car blazed out with light, turned on automatically; the walls of the tunnel were white and bright, and the place which I had feared would be so dismal was about the brightest spot I found in Chicago that day; and it will be so in the valley of the shadow

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of death. There will be no darkness there, and no fear. It is never dark where there is love and trust.

“Yea, though I walk through.” We are not going to stay there. It is only a stage of the journey; just a tunnel on the way; and what matter if the tunnel is dark, if all is so light and bright inside? We are going through the valley, and a prepared feast will be awaiting us on the other side.

And then, I like that word “walk.” There is a volume of comfort in it. When I was a boy, and had to pass a graveyard after night, I never did it on a walk. If I ever broke the small boy record for speed it was then. But in the valley of the shadow of death we are to walk, not run. This means no fear and no defeat. It is not a stampede in retreat, but a march to victory. We are to walk, we are not to be carried. We shall be alive, and have plenty of strength

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to sustain us. Lovers walk, but people who are afraid run. And then, think with whom we are walking. The One who loves us best. I once saw a man and his bride go ten miles in the caboose of a freight train, and they held each other's hands all the way, and it was a heavenly journey to them.

“The valley of the shadow.” Did you notice that it is only the valley of the shadow? Not the real thing, but just the shadow. This shows that it will not be dark there, for shadows can only be found where there is light. A shadow always means that there is a light, and the blacker the shadow the brighter the light. Have n’t you noticed how intensely black the shadows are under the electric light? How much more so than under any weaker light! The valley of the shadow of death is the brightest place we shall ever find this side

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of heaven, for the Light of the world is there.

A shadow can not harm us. All it can do is to frighten us. Shadows have no claws or weapons, and this is only the shadow of death. If we keep close to the Shepherd, all we shall ever see of death will be his shadow. He may let his shadow fall upon us, but he can never touch us with his hand, for did not Jesus say, "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death?"

Death has been overcome by Him whom we follow, and he will never come within reach of His strong right arm again. Who would ask for a better protector, or for better company? We have for our Friend and Guide the One who has conquered every enemy that can come out against us. Death may have once been in control of that valley, but it is his no longer. He has been overcome in it and driven out of it

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by the One who leads us now, like a lordly friend showing us his possessions.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

It is a great thing to lie down in green pastures, but a greater thing to walk through the valley of the shadow of death with the One whose presence and Spirit have changed us from a sheep into a warrior. The green pastures are the infancy experience of the Christian life, and the walking without fear is that of its manhood.

And yet the shadow is as real as the rod and the staff of the Shepherd are real. The shadow of death is proof that there is real death, just as the shadow of a lion is proof that there is a lion; but we have nothing to fear, because we follow Him who is mighty to save and strong to deliver. The deliverance that comes to us through Christ is deliverance from

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a deadly thing, and is a great deliverance. If He were not there with us in the valley of the shadow of death, life there would be impossible. The great thing, therefore, is to be identified with Him, knowing that He is abundantly able to protect us anywhere and everywhere.

“Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” Notice that the comfort and the security are because of what the Shepherd is, and is able to do, and not because of anything we can do for ourselves. He does it all, and the comfort is from Him all the way through. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.”

It is in what Jesus is and does that we have the foundation for our peace. There is no hope in anything we have done or can do for ourselves. He is the propitiation for our sins; He is

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our righteousness; He is our redemp-
tion money; He is our strength and
our Redeemer. He is everything
that God's law requires of us, and
in this we find our rest and comfort.

The sheep is helpless and defense-
less; but it knows what the rod and
the staff in the shepherd's hand can
do, for it has seen its worst enemies
destroyed by them.

The conventional shepherd's crook
with which we are so familiar, is a
poetic fancy that never had any re-
ality. A shepherd with no better de-
fense than that would not long have
the confidence of his sheep. A rod
of that kind is only fit to be decked
with ribbons and hung up in a parlor,
or be knitted and beaded into fancy
work. Such a rod would be a poor
defense in a battle with mice, and it
is not with any such flimsy thing that
the Palestine shepherd defends his
flock.

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If that poor toy were all we could look to for protection in the valley of the shadow of death, our comfort would be small indeed. I have seen the shepherd's weapons, and they are much better adapted for real warfare than the graceful but frail crook of story and picture. The rod is an immense war-club, big enough to brain a lion, and the staff is the rough limb of a tree, six feet long, and as thick as a man's forearm. No wonder there was comfort in the sight of them.

There is always comfort in knowing that we are well protected. There is comfort in having a good bolt on the door when you are sleeping in a strange house. There is comfort in knowing that the bridge your train must cross is a good one. There is comfort in having a good bed in a fireproof hotel. There is comfort in going to sea in a strong ship, and

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there is comfort to the soldier knowing that his side has the best guns and the most men. And there is comfort in the valley of the shadow of death in knowing that we have nothing to fear there.

CHAPTER V.

A FEAST AND A FOUNTAIN.

“THOU preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” Here is another evidence that the sheep has been changed into a warrior, for there is a decided change in the figure, and the language is no longer suited to the sheep experience, any more than baby talk would be to a Herbert Spencer. A sheep knows nothing about a table. What it understands is pasture. Give it plenty of grass and water, and it is in heaven. You have done all you can for it, for it has no more capacity.

And then a sheep has no enemies, for it never fights. If dogs or wolves

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set upon it, it stands helpless. It makes no resistance. A sheep before her shearers is dumb. I have been told that you can take a knife and cut into the flesh of a sheep and it will not move a muscle.

It is only those who are able to resist, who have enemies to contest the ground with them. The fact that enemies are found at the far end of the valley is proof that the valley of the shadow of death does not mean the death that comes at the end of life, for no one will admit for a moment that we are to have enemies in heaven.

But the Christian warrior has enemies. Whole battalions of them. Against him are principalities and powers, and he must battle against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. He comes out of the valley of the shadow of death to take his place on God's line of bat-

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tle; but if he is faithful he will be feasted there. He will have plenty of war, but there will not be any shortage of provisions. Meals are always served with promptness and regularity at the front.

The Christian, who has leanness in his soul, shows where he is by the condition he is in. Let him go to the front, and he may delight his soul in fatness. There is abundance for the fighter, but nothing for the straggler and deserter. The true soldier of the cross, who is in his place at the front, is always being feasted. The Lord has a way of making the desert blossom as the rose for him; of filling a barren land with milk and honey, and of raining bread from heaven. When our Master put the devil to flight after His long temptation, angels came and ministered unto Him. In the wars of God, battles and banquets go together.

And so, if we find ourselves feel-

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ing as the prodigal did in the far country, it means that we are too far from where the fighting is going on. We must get up to where the darts are flying and the trumpets are sounding, if we would have a good time and live on the old corn of the land.

It was because Lazarus had passed through the valley of the shadow of death that the Jews wanted to kill him. But you notice that he did n't run. He did n't try to hide in the timber. What did he do? He sat at the table with the Lord who had raised him from the dead. No wonder the Jews could n't frighten him.

There is some sweet comfort in that word "prepare." We prepare for our friends when they are coming to see us. We prepare good things for those we love, and we prepare the very things we know they like the best. Jesus said: "In My Father's house are many mansions: I go to

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prepare a place for you." Think of what a place it will be when infinite love and infinite wisdom and infinite power have prepared it.

I am so glad that I shall not have to prepare an eternal habitation for myself, for I am certain it would be an eternal disappointment. I have had some experience in preparing homes for myself, and I know how impossible it is for any one to build a house that will long please him. A very little experience in house-building will show any man how little he knows about himself. There is no such thing as lying down in green pastures there.

The builder of a new house will hardly get into it before he will be sadly disappointed in its plan. He will see at once how much better he might do if he could only try again. He will find some very important things that have been overlooked, and some useless ones that have been

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put in. The reason for this general disappointment in home building is that people grow and houses do not. The man who is building to-day is ignorant of what he will be after awhile, and so can not provide for his own growth. But the Lord knows all about what we shall be in the ages to come, and in preparing our heavenly home for us, everything we are to become will be considered and provided for.

“Thou preparest a table.” Think of what the feast will be when it is prepared for us by the One who loves us best, and the One who knows us best. If my wife had the purse of a millionaire, I would much rather have her prepare a feast for me than to have the millionaire do it, for she knows me and loves me as the millionaire does not.

And then notice where the feast is to be prepared. “In the presence of mine enemies.” The most difficult

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place in which a feast could be served. Well, if the Lord can feast me there, certainly it will be safe to trust Him to supply my wants everywhere else. The enemy will not have guns enough to interfere with that feast. He may rant and roar, and make a great show of wrath and war, but he will not be able to prevent that feast. He will have to suffer the mortification of seeing me feasted without being able to lift a finger to disturb my enjoyment. Certainly that is better than lying down in green pastures.

“Thou anointest my head with oil.” Another proof that there has been a transformation in character, for the sheep’s head is never anointed with oil. Kings and princes are anointed, but sheep never; so that the real meaning of these words is that there has been a promotion. The warrior has been made a prince—a prince with God. First put on the line of battle and made a victor there, and

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now promoted there. This is miles and miles beyond the green pastures and still waters with which he started, and now he has got to where his blessings come in cloudbursts. Listen:

“My cup runneth over!”

What more could the Lord do? Made a very artesian well of blessing. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” The man who has no joy in his religion has a big leak in his faith somewhere. Made a fountain of blessing to others, for there will be no waste of the overflow. He who said, “Gather up the fragments, that nothing be wasted,” will see to that. The Lord never allows any good thing to go to waste anywhere. Not even a sunbeam is permitted to throw itself away. For ages before men came to live in this world, the sun was pouring its heat and light down upon it, but God did not suffer a ray of it to

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be lost. It was stored away in coal and wood to give comfort and cheer in our homes now, and it is the same with spiritual blessing.

Wherever there is an overflowing cup, other vessels are being filled from the overflow. And certainly this ought to be the normal experience of every Christian. "Springing up into everlasting life." A well of water, mind you, and a flowing well, too; not a cistern, with a wheezy pump that squeaks in a way to put the teeth on edge, and which always has to be primed before you can get anything out of it. If this Psalm does n't tell us what Christian experience should be, it does n't tell us anything. If it does n't tell us what we may be and enjoy, it is simply an exaggeration.

"A well of water, springing up into everlasting life." There is successful irrigation for you, and much

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better, too, than that of the Nile; for that depends upon the weather above, but this does not, for it is an overflowing fountain. Why, even in the orange country of California they have no such abundance as this. There is no overflow. The man on the next place never gets any such abounding benefit from you. The water is turned on barely strong enough to reach the far end of the row and then seep away. There is no water to spare for the parched and thirsty soil on the other side of the fence.

Too many of us are that way in our religious life. We are not a fountain of blessing to anybody else, for whatever we get we keep. Getting and giving is the Lord's way, and getting to keep is man's way. The man who tried to keep his bread in the wilderness found that it bred worms, and it always does that in religious life. But the overflowing

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cup! There's freshness for you. Never anything stale about that.

In going from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon, the tourist passes Mt. Shasta spring, where the finest water in the world is bursting out of the rock in a great cascade, and where the train stops a few minutes, that whosoever will, may go to the water and drink.

There are always those on the train who have drunk from that fountain before, and are longing to do so again; and they have been giving their testimony so heartily that everybody is alive with expectation, and the moment the train stops the people rush out pellmell, as if they feared the supply would be exhausted before their turn came; and there is the water, pouring out in a stream that would turn a hundred mills, and bursting out of the rock in a great geyser sixty feet high; and what a draught of pure delight it is!

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No one has ever tasted such water before, and never will again, unless he goes back to drink from that same spring. The traveler will never be thirsty again without thinking of that wonderful fountain, and the taste of that pure, cold, crystal water will haunt him as long as he lives. A religious experience somewhat like that is meant by the overflowing cup—only a thousand times better; for in spiritual life you carry the fountain with you, and refresh others as Mt. Shasta spring does the thirsty tourist.

“My cup runneth over.” Notice whose cup it is. It belongs to the man who began in a sheep’s place by saying, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” He has gone on step by step, taking degree after degree in the blessed life until he has reached this place of overflowing blessing. Notice also that neither the size nor quality of the cup enters into the question. It will make no difference whether the

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vessel is small or large, or whether it is clay or gold. The result will be the same, no matter what the vessel is. It will be made to run over by that never-failing fountain.

Just as every disciple was filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, so may every one who knows Christ be filled now, no matter whether he is great or humble, or whether he has one talent or ten. The overflowing cup is for every child of God who gets into the paths of righteousness and stays there.

“My cup runneth over.” If that does n’t mean a heaven to go to heaven in, it is impossible to make language mean anything. Get a man to that place in his spiritual life, and going to church with a long face will be impossible. Only get him there, and he will be too busy in thinking and talking about the goodness of God to notice the faults of his neighbors, or think of counting the

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hypocrites in the Church. He will not spend all his time in figuring out how much he can save, but will be wanting to know how much he can give. Get him there, and his life will begin to be like a watered garden at once, and every lukewarm disciple who comes near him will begin to feel ashamed of himself.

Let the Sunday-school teacher get a flowing well experience, and he will not have to offer breastpins and badges to keep his class full, and he will not have to talk extra loud to get attention either. Let the preacher begin to carry the well around with him, and he will not find it a hard grind to get up his sermons, and his congregation will not go to sleep while he is preaching them. Let ten people in any Church become artesian wells, and a revival is bound to come that will shake the town, for ten such people would have saved Sodom.

How are we to get this overflowing

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experience? By doing just as David did. By definitely taking the Lord to be our Leader and Manager, and then following Him straight on through the valley of the shadow of death. But that is where the trouble lies. We are all willing enough to have the green pastures and still waters, but when we come in sight of the dark entrance to the valley of the shadow of death, we stop right there and stampede. It ought to be just as easy to trust the Shepherd in the valley of death as it is in the green pastures; but results seem to indicate that it is not. The sight of the place makes us tremble with fear, and we forget that the Shepherd with His rod and staff is abundantly able to protect us there.

CHAPTER VI.

A GLORIOUS VIEW.

THE Bible makes it clear that it is the privilege of the Christian to appropriate God by definite faith whenever he has a conscious need. The wide range of meaning in the Bible names for God certainly emphasizes this. "The Lord is my strength," is a sight draft already filled out for the child of God who knows himself to be weak, and "The Lord is my light" is the same for the man in the dark. The man who is providentially in a low place may say, "The Lord is my high tower," and at once be lifted high enough to know that all things are working together for his good. And the man who fails in

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everything he undertakes may say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and be led straight on the paths of righteousness, as David was.

When we once get the Lord for our beginning, we may have Him in an all-sufficient way all the way through life. The more we trust Him to-day the easier it will be to trust Him to-morrow. Doubts are Amalekites, against which we must wage a bitter war of extermination if we would enjoy undisputed possession of our inheritance in the land flowing with milk and honey. It is only when our faith is mixed with doubt that we can be anxious about what is to come. A blessed thing about life in Christ is, that we may not only have peace in the beginning, but all the way through.

But as David, with a shining face, tells of his overflowing cup and gushing well experience, perhaps some ready-to-halt doubter may say:

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“Yes, you are indeed at high tide now, but it is a great deal too good to last; and what will you do when your spring dries up and your cup is empty again?”

But David knows that it will last, and cries out with no uncertain sound:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”

Goodness and mercy have followed him so long and so well that he knows they can never be turned back now. Long before he reached the sublime degree of the overflowing cup he had said his last good-bye to a doubt, and would never renew the acquaintance again.

“But suppose you backslide, David?”

“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!” comes back with the ring of a true Damascus blade.

A black old aunty, with shining face and sunny heart, was trudging

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along with a heavy basket of clothes on her head, singing merrily, when a dismal-looking man accosted her with:

“S’pozen yo’ git wha’ yo’ kaint wash no mo’, an’ haf to go to de poo’ house, yo’ won’t sing like dat.”

“Go ’way wid dem s’pozens!” was her reply. “Dem s’pozens is what meks all de trubble in dis wo’ld, an’ I ain’t gwine to hab nuffin to do wid ’em nudder, I ain’t. De Lo’d is my Shep’d, an’ I sh’ll not want!” and with that she passed on, singing louder than before.

And so David would have treated every insinuation of a doubt, and so should every one who would keep the peace of God in his heart. If goodness and mercy have followed us all our lives—and we know that they have—what stronger evidence could we have that they will keep on doing so? When we would know what the Lord is going to do, we have only to

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remember what He has done. The man who could say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles," knew without any uncertainty that it would always be impossible for any kind of a trouble to trouble him long.

In the first green pasture stage of Christian life, a doubt of God's continual faithfulness may possibly get a foothold in our hearts; but by the time the overflowing cup is reached, such a thing is unthinkable. It is then no harder to count upon the Lord's constant presence and help than to expect the sun to shine to-morrow.

David knew that goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life, because he had forever settled the question as to where he was going to walk. When he planted his feet in the paths of righteousness he never intended to travel anywhere else. His face was set like

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a flint to the front, and he was determined to go straight on to the end. Backsliding would be less common if it were not more than half expected from the beginning. The man who says good-bye to the devil in a way that means good-bye forever, will not find him turning up again at every crossroad. Starting for heaven on a merry-go-round is not the way to make sure of a mansion above.

A wealthy young woman joined the Salvation Army. She had her best gowns carefully packed and put away, because she thought it would be so nice to have them if she should happen to leave the Army. Of course we all know about what kind of a soldier she proved herself to be, after planning for desertion from the beginning. But not so David. When he said, "The Lord is my Shepherd," it did n't mean that he was going to experiment with the Lord for a month or two, as is some-

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times the case with those who join the Church without knowing anything about conversion. That was never David's way in anything. When he once put his hand to the plow, it was with the determination that he would go straight on to the end of the furrow; and this is why he made a success of everything he ever undertook, from using the sling to ruling a kingdom.

The platform of David's religious life was: "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."

He intended to fence all the ground he stepped on, and to farm all he fenced, by letting everybody know where he stood. Getting religion, and keeping so still about it that nobody will ever suspect we have it, may be a shade better than not getting it at all, but it is a poor

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way to get much good out of it or to do much good with it. It may be set down as more than half true that the religion that is ashamed of itself generally dies young.

But David gave up the crooked path business on the day he began to walk in the paths of righteousness, and it was because of this that he had such strong assurance that he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever. He was positive that he had taken up his permanent abode there, for he had said a last farewell to the tents of wickedness, and had cut the bridges behind him by saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd." He had stopped trying to be his own keeper, and with the Lord for his Shepherd there was no doubt about what the final outcome would be.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," is the triumphant song of faith. The good days and the bad days.

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The bright days and the dark days. It is safe to count on goodness and mercy, whether we have any money in the bank or not. The days when we feel shouting happy, and the days when we feel like going to the juniper tree. The days when we can run and not be weary, and the days when even the grasshopper is a burden. This is a sure cure for all fret and worry about what may happen after awhile. It is the blessed assurance that God will never give us up.

Think of it when the sound of the grinding is low, and little feet are still. Think of it when there is crape on the door, and remember it when there is no bread in the house. When friends forsake you, remember that Goodness and Mercy are still with you. When you know not what to do, or which way to turn, do not forget that Goodness and Mercy are to be with you always. No matter what happens, count upon

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God's presence and help, and you will not reckon in vain. But do n't spend much time in looking back and lamenting the past, but trust God's goodness and mercy to take care of it.

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," because God's goodness and mercy do follow me. They guard me on every side like a body-guard of angels, and I will be safe because God is my safety. David could end by saying this, because he began by saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

The conclusion is inevitable that God wants us to have a definite faith that will appropriate Him, and thus obtain for ourselves the help He will so freely give. The weakest of His children have as much right to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," as David had, and if the word shepherd does not fully cover his need, he has a child's right to choose for himself one that will.

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I have never been a shepherd, as David was, and the word can not mean to me all that it meant to him; but there are other words that seem to fit my case, and this Psalm tells me that I may use them if I have the faith to do it, and He who said, "According to thy faith be it unto thee," will honor my draft.

There is the word Manager, for instance. It means much to me because I have had a manager to manage me, and have also been a manager myself. I know what a manager has to do and be. I also know how impossible it is for me to manage myself in my Christian life, or to manage for myself in all things, and so I turn all my cares and anxieties, my burdens and my perplexities, over to Him who loves me best, by saying, "The Lord is my Manager," and when I do it I am also able to say with complete assurance, "I shall not want;" for I know it is

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the business of a manager to take care of those whose movements he controls, and all I have to do is to trust and obey. Here are a few promises which make it clear that I do not misplace my trust.

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with Mine eye.”

Is n’t that saying, “I will manage thee,” as plainly as words can say it?

“And behold, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.”

“I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight [just what a manager has to do]; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.”

LIFTING THE LATCH

I have not been able to find a single caution or warning in the Bible against trusting God too much; and as long as He honors the drafts our faith makes Him, why should we not keep on drawing? "Ask largely, that your joy may be full."

"If our faith were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord."

L OF C.

NOTES.

Whenever there is trust, there is rest.

Whatever our faith says God is, He will be.

When trust begins in the right way, it will never end.

The scene opens in the desert, and closes in the Father's house.

The Psalm begins with definite trust, and ends with blessed assurance.

When our faith and our need speak together, God always hears and answers.

"All the days of my life," takes in the bad days as well as the good ones.

So long as we are pouring out, the Lord will not fail to pour in.

"I shall not want" can never be said without first saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Before we can have the Lord for our Shepherd, we must be willing to take the place of a sheep.

When the Shepherd is leading His sheep away from one pasture, they are on their way to another.

The valley of the shadow of death first leads to the battlefield, and then to the Father's house.

The day on which David said, "The Lord is my Shepherd," was a better day for him than the one on which he could say, "I am king."

NOTES

When the Shepherd has been followed in the valley of the shadow of death, it will not be hard to follow Him anywhere else.

We have as much right to appropriate God in a finite way as David had.

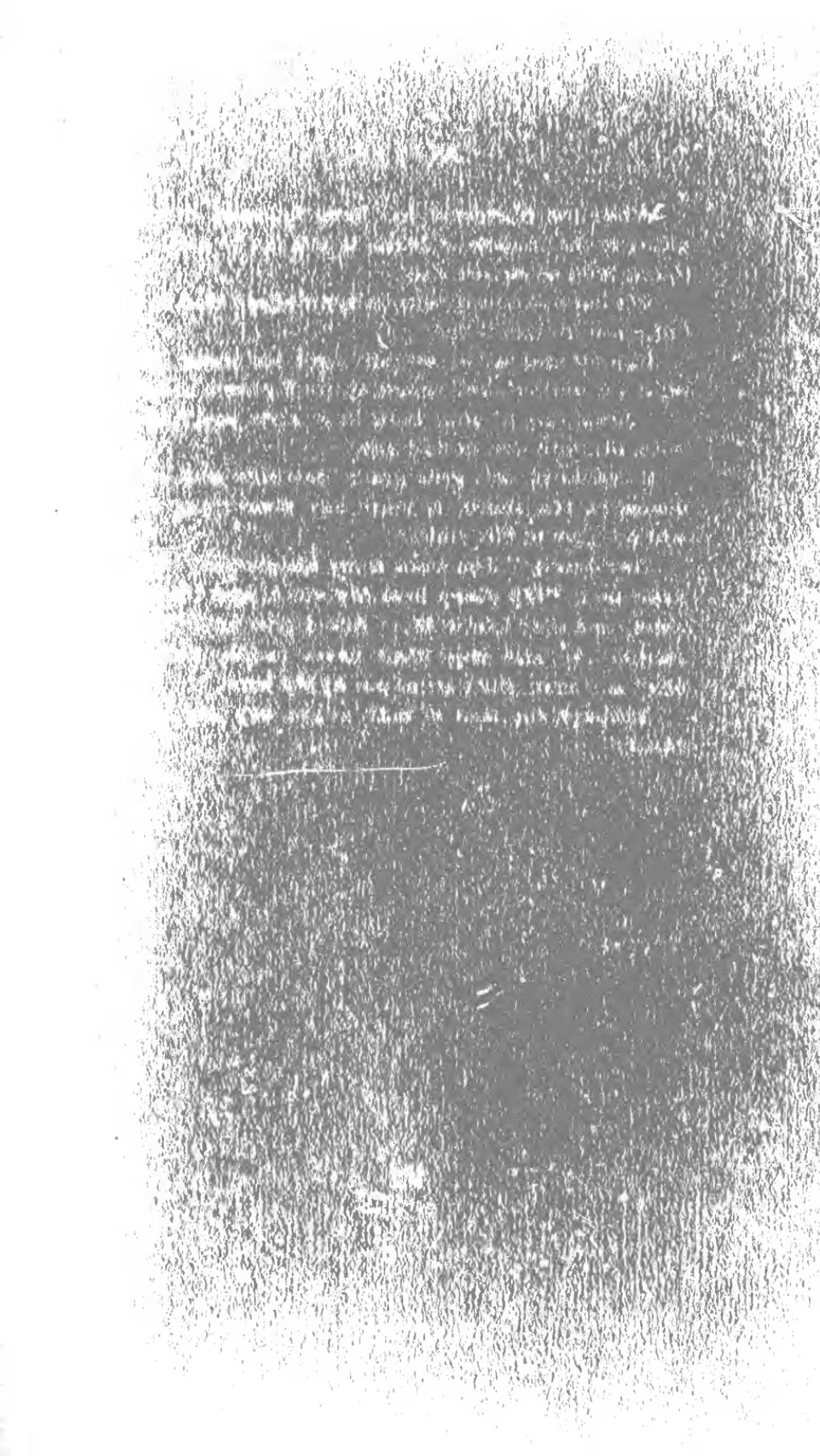
Pasture and water are all right for sheep, but what the warrior most wants is his Father's house.

"According to your faith be it unto you," is a letter of credit that is still good.

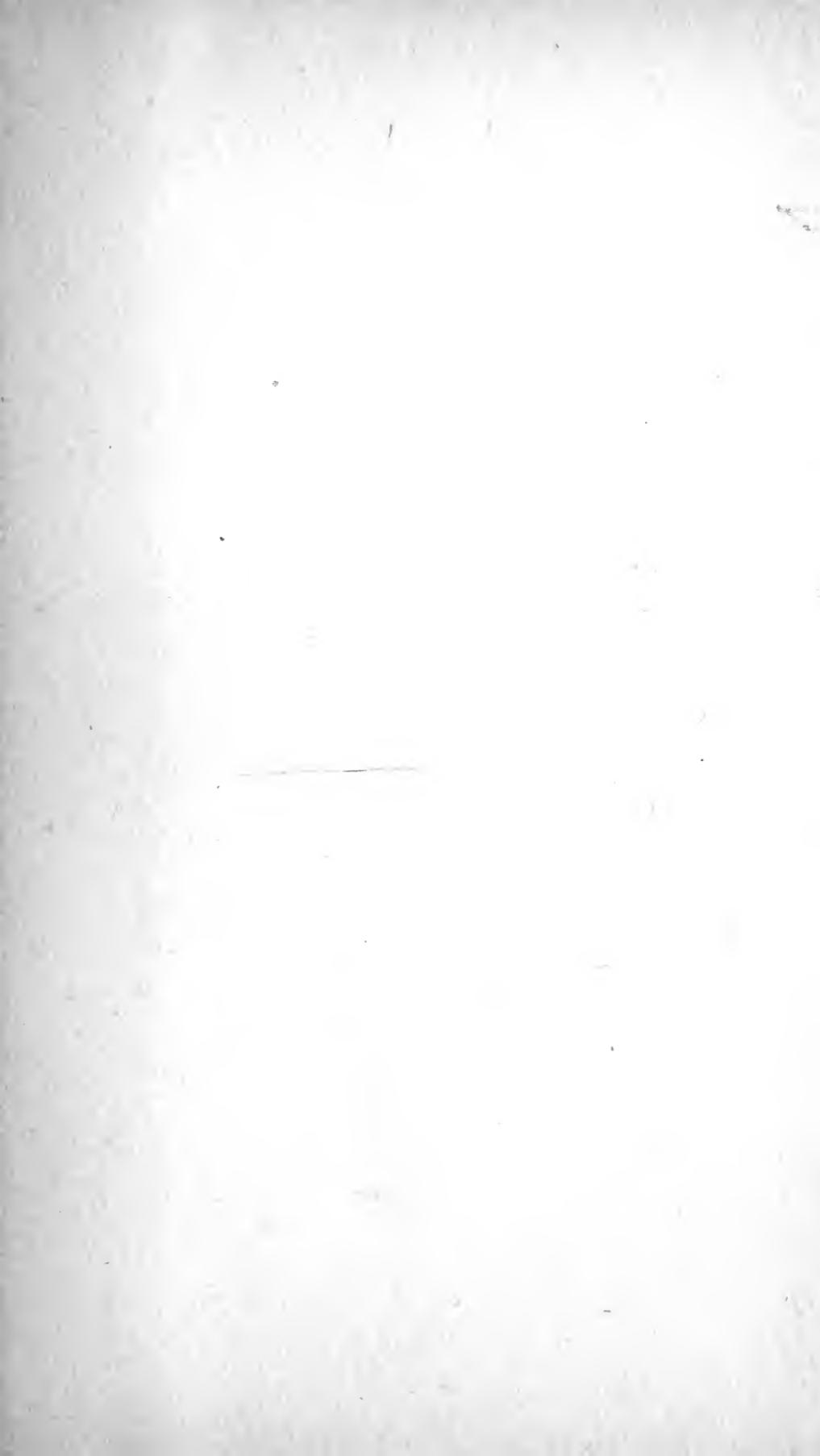
If the Lord will give green pastures and still waters to His sheep, is there any good thing He will not give to His child?

David said, "The Lord is my Shepherd." The Lord said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

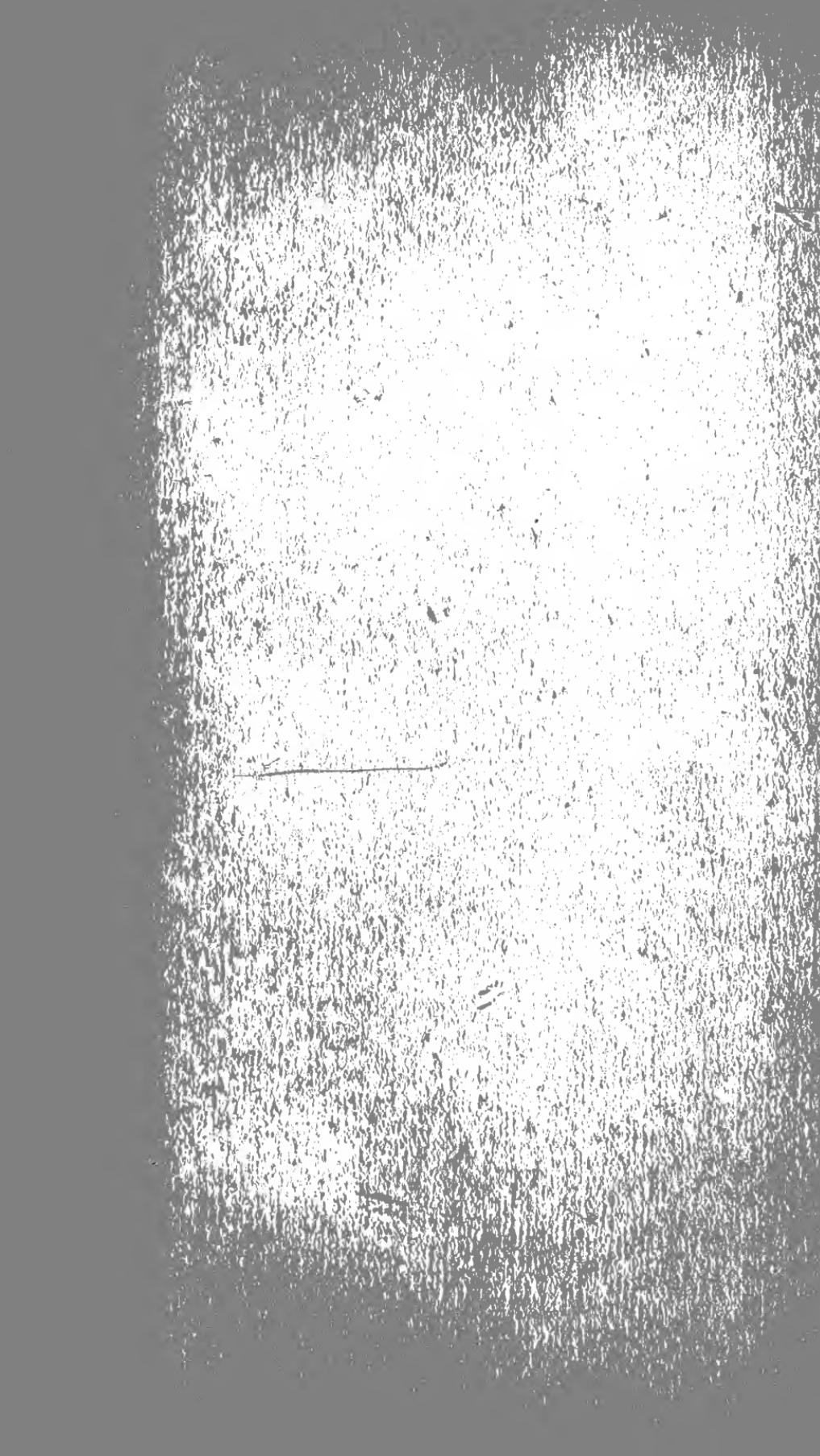
Through the door of faith is the way into that Hand.



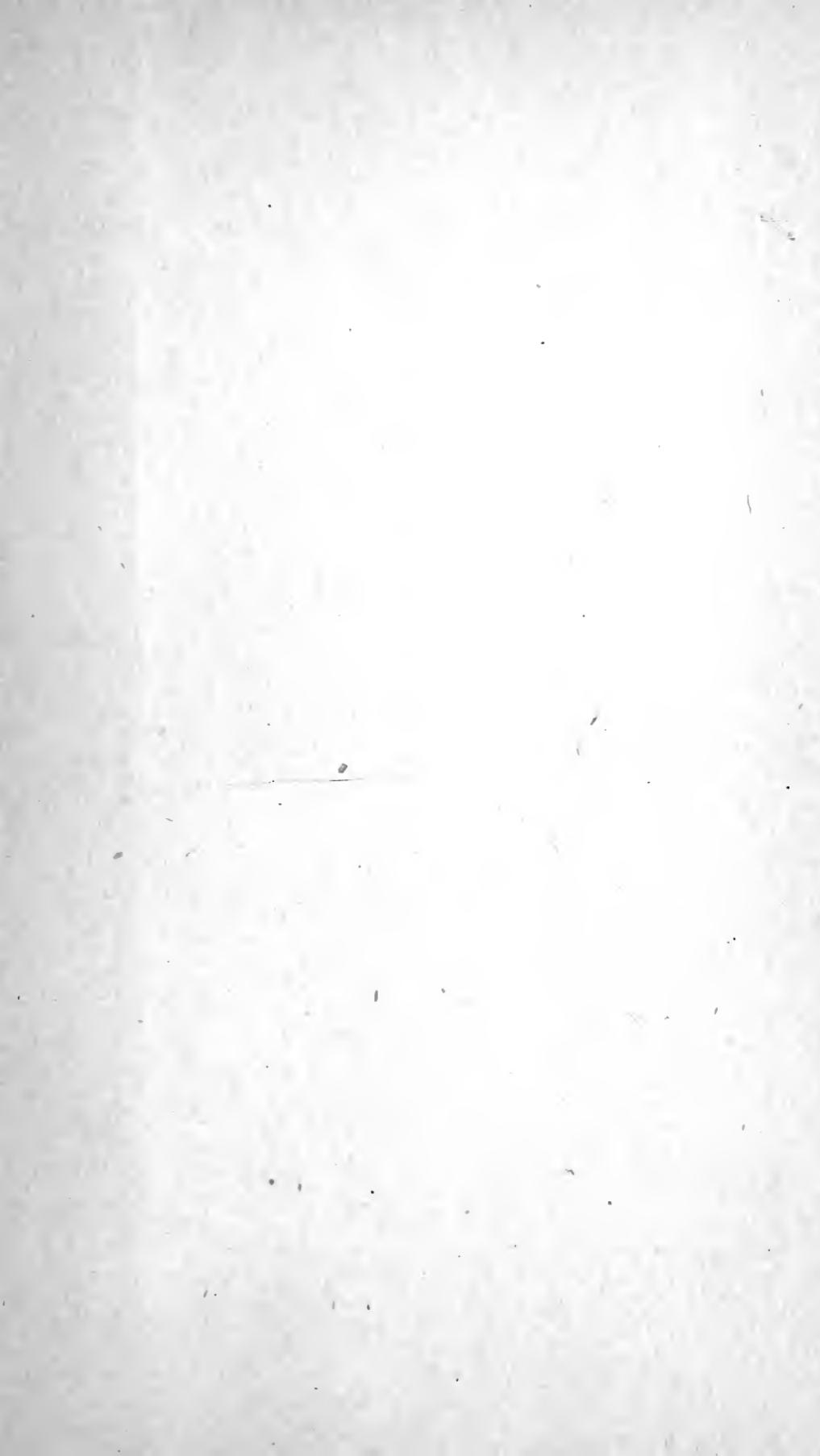












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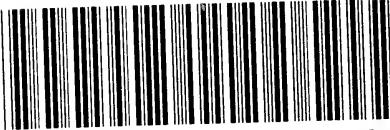
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